

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8301
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC
CINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 KABUL 4422 NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD; CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, AF
SUBJECT: IS THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME COMMUNIST?: EVIDENCE TO DATE

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE TOP LEADERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (DRA) HAVE MARXIST-LENINIST BACKGROUNDS AND THEIR PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN (PDPA) POSSESSES A TYPICAL COMMUNIST STRUCTURE, MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP CONTINUE TO CLAIM THAT THEY ARE NOT COMMUNIST AND THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT IS DEMOCRATIC, NATIONALISTIC, AND RESPECTFUL OF ISLAM. THUS FAR, THEIR ACTIONS HAVE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY BELIED THEIR WORDS, ALTHOUGH THESE MAY BE SHORT-TERM TACTICS, WHILE THE REGIME CONSOLIDATES ITS GRIP ON THE COUNTRY. ON THE FOREIGN POLICY SIDE, THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT TAKEN ANY STANCE ON NON-ALIGNED ISSUES

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APPRECIABLY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF THE DAOUD REGIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, AFGHANISTAN'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS VERY CLEAR. ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS WITH THE USSR ARE ANNOUNCED ALMOST DAILY (ABOUT 15 SO FAR), WHILE THE ONLY OTHERS SIGNED SO FAR HAVE BEEN

ONE EACH WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, AND YUGOSLAVIA. LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR REGIMES SINCE THE 1950S, THE DRA

IS CLEARLY DEPENDENT ON THE USSR FOR MOST OF ITS ECONOMIC AND MILITARY

SUPPORT. HOWEVER, SOVIET PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN HAS APPRECIABLY INCREASED SINCE THE COUP. ON BALANCE, WHILE IT IS CLEARLY IN THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, THERE STILL IS NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO CALL AFGHANISTAN A "COMMUNIST COUNTRY" OR A SATELLITE OF THE SOVIET UNION, ALTHOUGH THESE COULD WELL BECOME THE EVENTUAL FATE OF THIS COUNTRY. OUR BEST STRATEGY APPEARS TO BE ONE OF ENCOURAGING AN INDEPENDENT AND TRULY NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN. END OF SUMMARY.

2. HOW DO THE AFGHAN LEADERS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES? AFTER SLIGHTLY OVER

ONE MONTH IN POWER, THE NEW REGIME OF THE DRA CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT IT IS NOT COMMUNIST AND THAT AFGHANISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY REMAINS INDEPENDENT AND NON-ALIGNED. WHEN FOREIGN NEWS SERVICES, SUCH AS THE BBC'S NIGHTLY PERSIAN-LANGUAGE PROGRAM, IMPLY THAT THE DRA IS "COMMUNIST," THE KABUL REGIME REACTS SHARPLY AND SHRILLY WITH PROTESTS AGAINST SUCH "SLANDER BY THE REACTIONARY MEDIA." ASIDE FROM ONE ASSOCIATED PRESS NEWS REPORT, QUOTING A MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS SECURITY OFFICIAL AS HAVING TOLD AN AMERICAN NEWS CORRESPONDENT THAT THE NEW REGIME INTENDED TO CREATE A "MARXIST-LENINIST" AFGHANISTAN, THERE HAS BEEN NO OTHER STATEMENT OF THIS TYPE REPORTED THUS FAR FROM OTHER AFGHAN LEADERS. SINCE THE BEGINNING DAY OF THE REVOLUTION, APRIL 27, THE DRA LEADERSHIP HAS TOTALLY AVOIDED THE USE OF SUCH TERMS AS "SOCIALIST" OR "MARXIST-LENINIST"

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-- ALTHOUGH THEY NOT INFREQUENTLY EMPLOY OTHER PHRASEOLOGY COMMON IN COMMUNIST STATES (E.G., "SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS" ARE BEING SOUGHT TO CERTAIN PROBLEMS; "THE PARTY IS IN THE VANGUARD OF THE WORKERS, PEASANTS, AND INTELLECTUALS").

3. IS THE RULING PARTY REALLY COMMUNIST? PARTY LEADERS, SUCH AS NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAQI, CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND PRIME MINISTER, HAVE STRESSED SINCE THEIR APRIL 27-28 VICTORY THAT THEIR HEZB-I-DEMOKRATIK-I-KHALQ-I-AFGHANISTAN ("PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN" -- PDPA) IS A POPULAR, NATIONALISTIC, ANTI-ARISTOCRATIC, PROGRESSIVE PARTY. TARAQI POINTS OUT THAT THE NAME "COMMUNIST" HAS NEVER BEEN USED BY THE PARTY (COMMENT: THIS MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN BECAUSE IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRUDENT DURING THE MONARCHIAL AND DAUDIST ERAS TO HAVE PRESENTED SUCH AN OPEN POLITICAL AND SECURITY CHALLENGE TO THOSE REGIMES. END OF COMMENT). HOWEVER, OUR OWN FILES INDICATE THAT THE KHALQ AND PARCHAM WINGS OF THE PARTY HAVE PRIVATELY REGARDED THEMSELVES AS MARXIST-LENINIST SINCE THE PARTY'S FOUNDING IN 1965. INDEED, THE PARTY ENDEAVORED FOR YEARS TO GAIN RECOGNITION BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AS THE NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN, BUT MOSCOW STALLED THE AFGHAN LEFTISTS, NOT WANTING TO COMPLICATE SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT AND FORMER PRESIDENT

MOHAMMAD DAOUD. OTHER EVIDENCE BESIDES PAST STATEMENTS OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM AT LEAST A NEAR-COMMUNIST CHARACTER FOR THE PDPA. FOR ONE, THE PDPA HAS AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WHICH APPEARS IDENTICAL TO THOSE OF STANDARD COMMUNIST PARTIES ELSEWHERE. IN ANNOUNCING AN EXPANSION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY

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COUNCIL ON MAY 25, THE OFFICIAL "KABUL TIMES" STATED THAT THE DECISION HAD BEEN MADE BY THE "POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE" AND THAT IT WAS DISCLOSED BY THE "SECRETARIAT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE." THIS WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC CONFIRMATION THAT SUCH BODIES EXISTED -- AND WHAT THEIR RELATIVE ROLES WERE. TARAKI HAD EARLIER CONFIRMED AT HIS MAY 6 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE PDPA WAS THE SUPREME BODY IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WAS SUBORDINATE TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY.

4. HOW DOES THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT PORTRAY THE NATURE OF THE REVOLUTION? IN A CONVERSTATION WITH OUR AMBASSADOR ON MAY 6 (KABUL 3619), TARAKI LIKENED "THE REVOLUTION OF SAUR 7" (APRIL 27) TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, STATING THAT IT IS "OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, AND FOR THE PEOPLE." BABRAK KARMAL, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE

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REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, ALSO TOLD OUR AMBASSADOR (KABUL 3812) THAT THE NEW LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN INSPIRED BY THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, BABRAK SAID THAT THE FRENCH REVOLUTION HAD BEEN AN INSPIRATION AS WELL, AND WE CAN PRESUME SIMILAR STATEMENTS WERE MADE TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR. JUDGING FROM WHAT HAS BEEN SAID AND PRINTED IN THE AFGHAN MEDIA (ALL OF WHICH ARE GOVERNMENT-OWNED-AND-CONTROLLED), ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP IS SOMEHOW CONTINUING THE SOCIAL "AMANI" REVOLUTION LAUNCHED OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO BY KING AMANULLAH (1919-1929), A PROGRESSIVE MONARCH WHO ADMIRERD AND TRIED TO EMULATE HIS TURKISH CONTEMPORARY, MUSTAFA KAMAL ATATURK. INDEED, MOST OF THE NEW REGIME'S EXTENSIVE PROPOGANDA ABOUT THE EVENTS OF 1928 AND 1929 DISTORTS THE HISTORY OF THAT PERIOD, AND SUGGESTS THAT REVENGE AGAINST THE "NADERI CLIQUE"'S BRITISH-SPONSORED OVERTHROW OF THE AMANI MOVEMENT IS THE PRINCIPAL GLUE WHICH HOLDS THE CURRENT AMALGAM OF REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS TOGETHER. REVENGE IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS IN THIS VIOLENT, TRADITIONALIST SOCIETY. WHILE IT IS IMPROBABLE THAT, ASIDE FROM THE TOP LEADERSHIP, ALL THE PLAYERS IN THE NEW REGIME ARE CONVINCED COMMUNISTS, PROFESSIONAL COMMUNISTS ARE IN CHARGE AND SKILLFULLY STEERING THINGS THEIR WAY.

5. DO GOVERNMENT DECISIONS REFLECT COMMUNIST INFLUENCE? THE FACT THAT THE DRA HAS ACTED SO SWIFTLY TO ENLARGE THE SOVIET PRESENCE HERE AND THE FACT THAT IT HAS NEGOTIATED BILATERAL AGREEMENTS SO FAR SOLELY WITH THE USSR, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, GDR AND YUGOSLAVIA SUGGESTS A STRONG IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY WITH THOSE COUNTRIES. THE EXTENSIVE PRESS PLAY GIVEN TO CUBA'S VISITING REPRESENTATIVES, SHORTLY AFTER THE COUP, AND TO FOREIGN MINISTER HAFIZULLAH AMIN'S RECENT MEETING WITH FIDEL CASTRO IN HAVANA ONLY SERVE TO UNDERLINE THIS AFFINITY. NOTWITHSTANDING THE ABO E SIGNS, WE TEND NEVERTHELESS TO BELIEVE THAT IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT THERE POSSIBLY ARE ALL SHADES OF LEFTISTS REPRESENTED, FROM FABIAN-TYPE SOCIALISTS TO HARD-LINE MARXISTS.

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WHILE NEITHER THE PARTY NOR THE GOVERNMENT HAS YET PUBLISHED ANY COMPREHENSIVE IDEOLOGICAL STATEMENT, WHAT HAS BEEN SAID SO FAR IN SPEECHES AND THE PRESS SUGGESTS A MARXIST ORIENTATION -- AND A DELIBERATE PARTY POLICY TO DISGUISE THIS FROM THE PUBLIC. SIGNIFICANT TOO IS THE LIP SERVICE BEING PAID TO ISLAM. THIS ISLAMIC FEATURE IS CONSTANTLY PLAYED UP IN THE MEDIA. ALSO, IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WERE OF A CLASSIC COMMUNIST TYPE, ONE WOULD EXPECT INDICATIONS OF THIS FACT FROM ITS ECONOMIC POLICIES. SO FAR, HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN FEW SUCH INDICATIONS. TO BE SURE, UNDER THE

DAOUD REGIME, ALL SIZEABLE INDUSTRIES HAD ALREADY BEEN NATIONALIZED. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE IN EARLY MAY, TARAKI ACKNOWLEDGED THERE WAS LITTLE LEFT TO TAKE OVER. THE FEW INDICATIONS WE HAVE OF THE SHAPE OF THE ECONOMY TO COME ARE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF EXTENSIVE PRICE CONTROLS, HINTS OF NATIONALIZATION OF ALL FOREIGN TRADE, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF PARTY MEMBERS, COMMUNIST-COUNTRY TRAINED ECONOMISTS, AND SOVIET ADVISORS TO ECONOMIC-RELATED MINISTRIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOVERNMENT'S 30-POINT PROGRAM OF MAY 9 SPECIFICALLY STATED RESPECT FOR PRIVATE PROPERTY AND PERMITTED "SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED INDUSTRIES." MOREOVER, THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK, WHICH FINANCES PRIVATE SECTOR INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENTS,

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IS TO CONTINUE -- AND EXPAND -- ITS PROGRAM, ACCORDING TO ITS NEW PRESIDENT. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS EVENTUALLY TO HAVE A CONTROLLED, PLANNED ECONOMY OF AN EASTERN EUROPEAN TYPE, BUT THAT THIS WILL BE UNFOLDED ONLY GRADUALLY.

6. DOES AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY SERVE COMMUNIST GOALS? JUDGING FROM HOW WORLD AFFAIRS ARE BEING HANDLED BY THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AFGHAN MEDIA, THE VIEWS OF AFGHANISTAN CONCERNING VARIOUS INTER-

NATIONAL PROBLEMS (E.G., SOUTHERN AFRICA) HAVE NOT CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE DAYS OF THE DAOUD REGIME. THE AFGHAN PERFORMANCE DURING THE RECENT MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING BUREAU AT HAVANA REFLECTED THIS SAME DESIRE TO PROJECT KABUL'S TRADITIONAL POLICY OF GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT. THE ONLY IMPORTANT CHANGE WE HAVE NOTED SINCE THE REVOLUTION IS A REDUCTION IN MEDIA
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COVERAGE OF WORLD EVENTS, PERHAPS FOR TWO PRINCIPAL REASONS: (A) AN ALMOST COMPLETE ABSORPTION IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AT THIS TIME; AND (B) A TACTICAL DECISION TO AVOID TAKING FOREIGN POLICY STANDS AT THIS TIME WHICH WOULD BE AWKWARD TO ALTER LATER SHOULD THE AFGHAN REGIME INDEED SHIFT FROM TRUE NON-ALIGNMENT TO A MORE PRO-SOVIET STANCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA. MOREOVER, WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN ANY MENTION OF THE CATCH PHRASE "PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM," WHICH USUALLY INDICATES SUBSERVIENCE TO MOSCOW'S LEADERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT.

7. IS AFGHANISTAN A SOVIET SATELLITE? OUR ANSWER IS NOT YET -- BUT IT COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME SO. THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OBVIOUSLY GIVES FIRST PLACE TO ITS "UNDYING" CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS "GREAT NORTHERN NEIGHBOR," AND THE DRA'S SUPPORT COMES PREDOMINANTLY FROM THAT COUNTRY. WHILE MOSCOW HAS NOT FORMALLY ANNOUNCED AN EXTENSION OF THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE TO AFGHANISTAN, WERE THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP THREATENED BY CIVIL WAR OR AN EXTERNAL THREAT, IT SEEMS CERTAIN THE SOVIETS WOULD ACT PROMPTLY TO PROP UP ANY PRO-MOSCOW ELEMENT. WHETHER THE SOVIETS WOULD ACTUALLY SEND DIVISIONS ACROSS THE OXUS TO MAINTAIN THEIR POSITION IS MOOT -- BUT IT WOULD BE NAIVE FOR US TO ASSUME THAT THEY NEVER WOULD. AS SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER N.P. FIRYUBIN RECENTLY STATED THE CAST, "THE CLOCK CANNOT BE TURNED BACK." IF SO, THE QUESTION THEN IS HOW MUCH FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY DOES THE DRA HAVE VIS-A-VIS THE USSR? TO SOME DEGREE, POSSIBLY IN ORDER TO INTIMIDATE POTENTIAL DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN OPPOSITION, THE DRA FEELS A NEED TO STRESS ITS SOVIET TIES. THE TOP DRA LEADERS UNDOUBTEDLY DRAW IDEOLOGICAL INSPIRATION FROM THE USSR. ITS INTERNAL POWER POSITION ALSO DEPENDS IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS ON SOVIET MILITARY AND ECONOMIC HELP. IF PAST EXPERIENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES IS ANY GUIDE, THE RELATIONSHIP COULD TURN SOUR. BUT, MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND MILES OF SHARED FRONTIER WITH THE SOVIET UNION PREVENTS KABUL FROM ENJOYING THE KIND OF FLEXIBILITY THE EGYPTIANS,
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ALBANIANS, AND SOMALIS HAD.

8. CONCLUSIONS: ALTHOUGH THIS EMBASSY HAS NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE

MARXIST-LENINIST CREDENTIALS OF THE NEW AFGHAN LEADERS -- AND WE WITNESS DAILY THE INCREASING ROLE OF SOVIET ADVISORS THROUGHOUT THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT -- IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO LABEL AFGHANISTAN AS A COMMUNIST COUNTRY OR A SATELLITE OF THE SOVIET UNION, ALTHOUGH IT IS CLEARLY IN THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. EVEN IF THE DRA LEADERS WERE TO REVEAL THEIR RED COLORATION AT SOME LATER DATE, THAT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY ENSURE THAT THEY WOULD -- OR COULD -- DELIVER THE FIERCELY INDEPENDENT NATION OF AFGHANISTAN INTO COMPLETE SOVIET CONTROL. EVEN IF TARAKI OR BABRAK WERE INCLINED TO BE SOVIET MINIONS, WE DOUBT THAT SOME OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMON REVOLUTION WOULD LIGHTLY TOLERATE SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION. OUR BEST NATIONAL STRATEGY STILL APPEARS TO BE ONE OF ENCOURAGING AN INDEPENDENT AND TRULY NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN. AS ONE OF OUR PAKISTANI COLLEAGUES HERE RECENTLY COMMENTED, EVEN IF THAT CHANCE WERE ONLY TEN PERCENT, IT WOULD STILL BE WORTH THE EFFORT.

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